



# CULTURAL GUIDE TO PAKISTAN

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# **CULTURAL GUIDE TO PAKISTAN**

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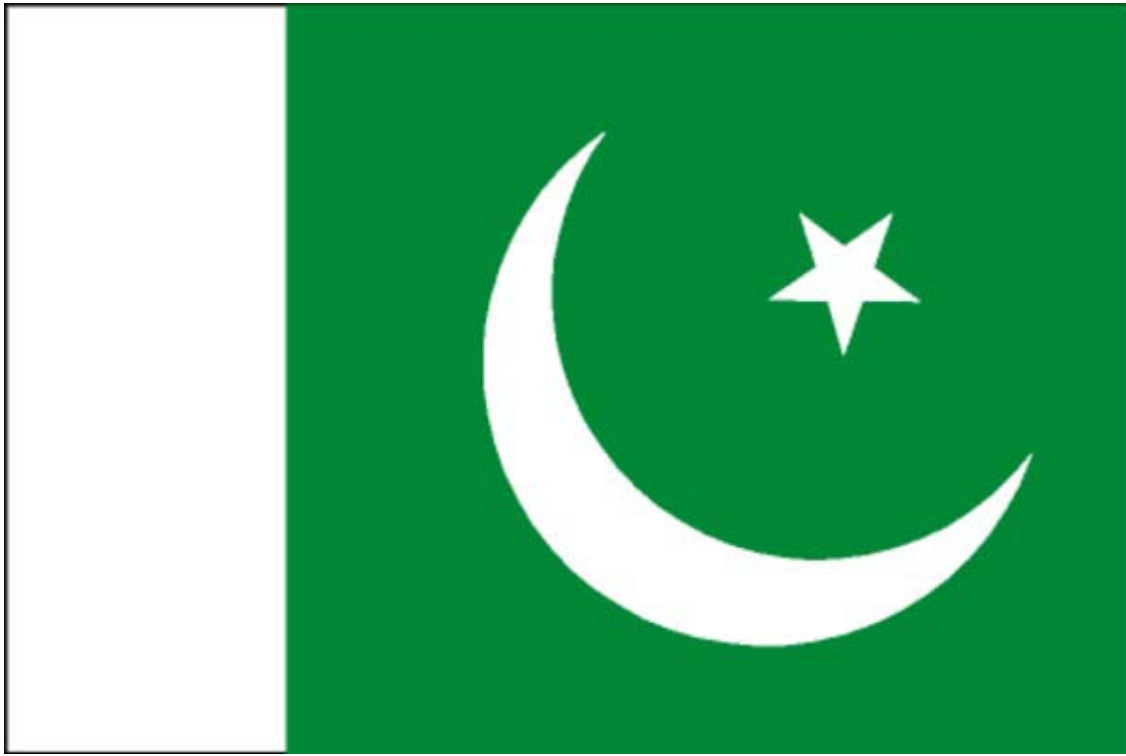
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# INTRODUCTION

The media's portrayal of Pakistan as a predominantly fundamentalist state, laced with communal violence and dictatorial rule, clouds the country's most amazing aspects: its beautiful landscapes, rich diversity of cultures and dialects, and a long tradition of hospitality.

With such a diverse culture, you may find some social customs



**Mosque symbolizing Pakistan's status as a fundamentalist state.**

familiar, others puzzling or exotic. The purpose of this guide will be to offer a few observations on basic cultural values, as well as to set down some specific behavioral guidelines for common social situations. Whereas this guide outlines the general political and economic background of Pakistan as a whole, the cultural and social insights and guidelines given here stem mostly from traditions of Lahore and its surrounding area.

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

### THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

A country slightly less than twice the size of California, Pakistan is located in Southern Asia. It borders the Arabian Sea to the south, and is positioned between India to the east and Iran and Afghanistan to the west. Its northern border is shared with China.

The main waterway of Pakistan is the Indus River that begins in China, and runs nearly the entire length of Pakistan, flowing through all of Pakistan's provinces except Baluchistan. Several major rivers, interconnected by the world's largest system of agricultural canals, join the Indus before it discharges into the Arabian Sea.

The northern and western areas of Pakistan are mountainous. Pakistani-administered areas of Kashmir contain some of the highest mountains in the world, including the second tallest, K-2. Northern Pakistan tends to receive more rainfall than the southern parts of the country. In the southeast, Pakistan's border with India passes through a flat desert, called the Cholistan or Thal Desert. West-central Baluchistan has a high desert plateau, bordered by low mountain ranges. Most of the Punjab, and parts of Sindh, are fertile plains where agriculture is of great importance.

With a population of more than 150 million, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the sixth most populated country in the world and the second largest Muslim country. This, coupled with a high growth rate, means that Pakistan is expected to overtake other nations in population in the near future, and may become the third-most populous nation by 2050 if population-control measures fail. The majority of the people of Pakistan are Muslim, with a sizeable minority of Shiite Muslims. A small minority of non-Muslims exist, mostly Christians, Hindus, and smaller groups of Buddhists in the remote Northern Areas.



**The landscape in northern Las Bela, Baluchistan, reflects Pakistan's dry desert regions.**

A large Pakistani diaspora exists, especially in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia as well as in the Scandinavian nations. A large number of Pakistanis are also living in the Middle East. These emigrants and their children influence Pakistan culturally and economically, by travelling to Pakistan, and especially by returning or investing there.

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and English is the official language. English is used in government and corporate business, and by the educated urban elite. Public universities use English as the medium of instruction. Urdu is the lingua franca of the people. Besides these, nearly all Pakistanis speak mutually related Indo-European language, of which the most widely spoken is Punjabi, followed by Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi. Punjabis compose the largest ethnic group in the nation. Other important ethnic groups include: Sindhis, Pashtuns, Balochis, and Muhajirs (immigrants from India). There are also sizeable numbers of other immigrant groups such as Bengalis that are concentrated in Karachi.

## POLITICAL HISTORY

Originally part of Afghanistan and India, modern Pakistan evolved when the British partitioned both countries into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. From August 1947 until 1971 the nation consisted of West Pakistan and East Pakistan, separated from one another by India. In 1971 East Pakistan rebelled, and with the aid of Indian troops became the independent state of Bangladesh. Since independence Pakistan has been in constant dispute with India over the territory of Kashmir and Afghanistan over the Durand Line.

The country's dominion status was ended in 1956 with the formation of a Constitution and a declaration of Pakistan as an Islamic Republic, but it has been only intermittently democratic. Pakistan has a long history of military dictatorships including General Ayub Khan in the 1960s, General Zia ul Haq in the 1980s, and General Pervez Musharref from 1999.

In October 1999 General Pervez Musharraf overthrew the civilian government and assumed executive authority. Local government elections were held in 2000. Musharraf declared himself president in 2001. A national referendum was held in April 2002 to approve Musharraf's role as president. Nationwide parliamentary elections were held in 2002 with Zafarullah Khan Jamali of the Pakistan Muslim League party emerging as Prime Minister. After more than a year of political wrangling in the bicameral legislature, Musharraf struck a compromise with some of his Parliamentary opponents, giving his supporters the two-thirds majority vote required to amend the constitution in

December 2003. A parliamentary electoral college—consisting of the National Assembly and Senate and the provincial assemblies—gave Musharraf a vote of confidence on January 1, 2004, thereby legitimizing his presidency until 2007. Jamali resigned on June 26, 2004. Finance minister and former Citibank VP Shaukat Aziz, credited with Pakistan's economic turnaround, was named to the post by interim prime minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. (On May 22, 2004, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group readmitted Pakistan into the Commonwealth.)

## INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES

### Kashmir

Kashmir remains the world's largest and most highly militarized territorial dispute with portions under the de facto administration of China (Aksai Chin), India (Jammu and Kashmir), and Pakistan (Azad Kashmir, and Northern Areas). The two countries, now nuclear powers, have already fought two wars over Kashmir, but recent discussions and confidence-building

measures among the parties are beginning to defuse tensions.

### India

India does not recognize Pakistan's ceding lands to China in 1965 boundary agreement.

India is also in dispute with Pakistan over Indus River water sharing and the terminus of the Sir Creek Estuary at the mouth of the Rann of Kutch, which prevents maritime boundary delimitation. Pakistani maps continue to show Junagadh claim in India's Gujarat State.



**Kashmir remains the world's largest and most highly militarized territorial dispute.**



## Afghanistan

Despite largely successful UN efforts at voluntary repatriation, thousands of Afghan refugees continue to reside in Pakistan. Pakistan has sent troops into remote tribal areas to control the border with Afghanistan to stem organized terrorist and other illegal cross-border activities. Regular meetings with Afghan and coalition allies aim to resolve periodic claims of boundary encroachments.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Pakistan is faced with a number of challenges on the political and economic fronts. Historically, a lack of foreign investment, and a costly confrontation with neighboring India have resulted in a negative perception of Pakistan, especially among Western countries. However, Pakistan's economic outlook has brightened in recent years in conjunction with a great improvement in its foreign exchange position, notably its current-account surplus and rapid growth in hard currency reserves. Additionally, the reduced tensions with India and the ongoing peace process raise new hopes for a prosperous and stable South Asia.

Pakistan's economy, thought to be highly vulnerable to external and internal shocks, was unexpectedly resilient in the face of adverse events such as the Asian financial crisis, global recession, drought, the post-9/11 military action in Afghanistan, and tensions with India. In the four-year period since the



Since the 9-11 attacks in the United States, Pakistan's KSE-100 stock exchange has been the best performing in the world.

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The Government of Pakistan has, over the last few years, granted numerous incentives to technology companies wishing to do business in Pakistan. A combination of decade-plus tax holidays, zero duties on computer imports, government incented venture capital and a variety of government programs to subsidize technical education, have lent great impetus to the fledgling information technology industry. Many of Pakistan's technology companies supply software and services to the world's largest corporations.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The first words you learn in any language are likely to be the equivalent of hello. The reasons are not only linguistic but cultural. Being able to greet people in their own language allows you to make the first overtures to friendship. The universal greeting in Arabic is "asalaam alaykum," to which the reply is "valaykum asalaam." Men shake hands when introduced, women usually nod their heads. "Khuda hafez" or "Allah hafez" are the most common ways of saying "goodbye."

Introductions are sometimes complicated since Pakistanis don't always use a surname. Classic Urdu prefaces a man's name with the title "Jenab" and "Sahib," and a married woman's with "Begum," but Mr. and Mrs. are also perfectly acceptable. The English "Auntie" and "Uncle" are freely used by children for any friends of their parents. Many children have nicknames which for boys end in "u" and for girls end in "i": Anwar is Anu and Shahnaz is Nazi. If you have any doubts about a name, it is probably best to err on the side of formality.

## NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

You call someone with your palm down, which is how we wave goodbye. It is quite rude when crossing the legs to let the sole of your foot point to anyone in the room.

When it comes to greetings, men shake hands; friends embrace. Traditionally women do not shake hands with men. Some of the urban working women might stretch out their hand for a greeting, and a foreign woman may do so without hesitation.

But a man should never be the first to extend his hand to a lady. There are women who interact with men in business or social life like women in the western world; but they will not expect to be jovially slapped on the shoulder or hugged.

Eye contact between unrelated men and women is not considered proper. People generally look—“stare”—at each other. For a foreigner especially, this behavior might seem disconcerting, though by cultural standards it is not considered rude. Do not take offense.

There aren't many opportunities for friendship between men and women in Pakistan. At social events, women tend to sit together in what is jokingly referred to as a “purdah circle.” Although it is perfectly acceptable for men to be affectionate with other men, even to the point of holding hands and embracing, it does not signify a relationship other than friendship. You will rarely see any physical affection between men and women in public.

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

### VALUES

To the Pakistani, the old caste system of social order still holds in assessing a person's merit on a social, business, or even marital occasion. Many forms and documents still mention caste.

**Some women interact with men in a business or social setting like women in the western world, although their behavior does remain more reserved.**

Among the modern city-proletariat these ties are broken. They do not know of caste or clan: they might remember that their grandfather came from such and such area. For people of standing, these are persons of no consequence, neutrals. It is all the more difficult for a Pakistani who has not had exposure abroad to fathom a foreigner. In the absence of more detailed information the nationality of a person has to serve as a caste characteristic which is by nature simplistic.

The west is both degenerate—just look at the pictures of nudity and sexual behavior in magazines—and simultaneously it has the last say in matters of scientific thought and progress, and even the continuity of cultural identity. Yet, everybody has between one and five relatives abroad—and those that are left here also want to go.

America is the great ideal. Marriage advertisements that include among the applicant's qualities that he is a “green card holder,” i.e., that he is someone who is legally allowed to live and work in the United States,



have the greatest chances of finding a partner. It is a love-hate relationship. Americans living in Pakistan keep to themselves, so they are considered arrogant and hypocrites. They represent the implementation of U.S. policy in Pakistan and therefore are often the target of attack when political tempers run high.

Generally, people try to emulate the U.S. and the West in their daily life style. Using Western products, listening to English-language music, wearing Western clothing, and dining out at American fast food chains such as Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and McDonald's enhances one's social image as it reflects a lavish lifestyle.

The foreigner must always remember that no matter how long he has been in the country he will always be a "guest" for the people: he does not share their language, disadvantages, poverty, and complexes vis-à-vis the developed world.

## TIME AND SPACE

Conceptions of time and space are different, too. Life moves more slowly in Pakistan. From an American point of view, a great deal of time is spent "just sitting around." Come for a picnic at 10:00 a.m., a friend will tell you, when you both know you won't actually leave the house until 12:00 p.m. He can't understand your impatience to get moving. If you really do get fidgety, then don't go until later, or prepare yourself for the inevitable delays. Time is not a precious commodity in Pakistan, so it can't be "wasted."

## RELIGION

In 1956, Pakistan was proclaimed an Islamic Republic; Islam is, therefore, part of Pakistan's national identity. Some understanding of Islam and

the social pattern it encourages is essential for Americans living in Pakistan.

The devout Muslim is bound to pray five times a day; observe the strict fast of Ramadan; not eat pork or drink alcohol; and one day in his life, if health and finances permit, should make the pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the "Haj." After successful completion of the rituals, the pilgrim adopts the title "Haji." A man thus introduced, will be addressed with "Haji Sahib" (Mr. Pilgrim). Women are "Al Haja" but one does not address them as such.

### Prayer



Devout Muslims pray five times a day.

For his five daily prayers, the devout Muslim, wherever he is, will kneel down and perform the required ritual. For the five prayers of the day, different numbers of obeisances are prescribed. After thorough ablutions, they are performed barefoot on a clean mat facing Mecca. Nobody should pass in front of a praying person.

Women do not say their prayers in public and only very few mosques are open to Muslim women to pray in. They pray in the silence of their homes instead.

### Religious Taboos

There are few religious taboos. By and large, great tolerance is shown to foreigners as they cannot be expected to know all do's and don'ts of the religion. However, a people that is so emotional about its religion can also be expected to react strongly if their religious sentiments are insulted. The rules are simple.

### Discussions

Religion is discussed everywhere: on the bus, in shops, in offices, simply everywhere—discussed but never criticized. You should be careful to note the difference.

People will appreciate if you show interest and ask questions on Islam, its history, happenings, and rituals; they enjoy talking about it and mostly will give you detailed and accurate (but most likely subjective) information.

## Ramadan

The month of fasting, Ramadan, is devoutly observed by most adult Muslims. From before sunrise until the moment after sunset no food, drink, taste, dust or whatever other substance may pass the lips. At summer temperatures of over 40°C this is no small thing—on top of the workload. However, national production drops by 30 percent during Ramadan. One may earn less, go to the office late, be exhausted by the afternoon—nothing matters; at all costs, the fast must be kept.

After the *muezzin*, the mosque attendant, has given the *azān*, the prayer call from the mosque for the evening prayer, the Muslim will follow the example of the prophet and break fast with a date and water before going to the mosque for prayers. After that begins the feasting to which the food stalls in the bazaar (which double in number during the month of fasting) are eloquent witness. This provides ample opportunity to snack, and at around 3 in the morning the housewife begins to prepare a hot pre-sunrise meal.

During the month of fasting, all restaurants are closed until sundown. People will not say anything but frown if, during this month, you should smoke, eat or drink in public. Only children are excepted, but exercise tact and courtesy: there is really no need to give them a biscuit in front of people whose stomachs are empty. Chewing gum will also not be welcome in public or when sitting in a group.

Four- and five-star hotels provide the normal food and meals to non-Muslim foreigners. On the national airline, PIA, everybody is asked whether he wants to eat his meal at normal times or at Ramadan times, although there is an exemption from fasting for those traveling.

## Food

If you really cannot avoid offering pork at your party, in whatever form, you must clearly label the dish that contains it PORK. On no account should pork be placed on a dish containing other foodstuffs. It is highly advisable to avoid pork dishes when inviting Muslim guests. It's a matter of great religious sensibility.

## Alcohol

The drinking of alcohol is strictly prohibited in Islam. There are no shops selling liquor. Those who need it make it at home or have other channels of procurement. If you have no entitlement to import it or no other sources to buy it, you can get beer, whisky, gin, and vodka (all locally made and quite good, the beer being very good) at the clubs (if you are a

member) or at a 5-star hotel. For that, you need a permit. It carries the elaborate title: "Permit under the Prohibition Order 1979 for the Purchase, Possession, Transport, and Consumption of Intoxicating Liquors by a Foreigner or Tourist Holding a Valid Passport." You can obtain one of these permits from the Excise Department in the cities.

Even a foreigner should never drink alcohol in public. Drinking is such a delicate issue that grown up men who do drink will often not do so in their homes (it would render the home unclean), or in front of their elders (out of respect). And some never drink in front of the women of the house.



**Food stalls in the bazaar double in number during the month of Ramadan.**



**Many men wear white skull caps meant for prayer all the time.**

### **Young and Old**

Before a boy reaches adolescence he must be circumcised. A dead man may not be cremated but is buried. A menstruating woman may not pray nor fast. These are the most important dogmas which the Muslim observes quite strictly. There are innumerable other practices which undergo minor changes with time and place.

### **Halal Meat**

Animals are invariably slaughtered by cutting the jugular vein and uttering the words “Allah-u-Akbar,” God is greatest. Meat that is not treated this way may be refused by strict Muslims; and when they go abroad, they might even restrict their diet to a vegetarian one.

### **Gratitude**

Success and failure in life is attributed to God’s will. And when someone has done well in an examination or got a job, he attributes his success to Allah’s blessing. And he often offers a thanksgiving sacrifice “Sadka” in the form of alms or gift for the poor.

### **Dress**

Women must keep their heads covered with the *dupatta*, the fine, mostly beautiful veil, particularly in the presence of elders (modern, urban women often

ignore the *dupatta*) and keep their eyes cast down and only speak in answer to a question. When going out, some women wear the *burquah*, the black or white cloak that totally shrouds the person, though in recent times this has come to be identified with low, middle, and poorer classes. When a verse from the Koran is recited at the beginning of a formal function or serious undertaking, or prayer takes place anywhere, or the azaan, the call for prayers is heard, it is best if women cover their heads just like local women do. It is advisable to carry a scarf along at all times, although there is great tolerance and acceptance of other peoples’ customs.

Women are advised not to wear tightly fitting clothes. Pakistani women’s clothing is most comfortable, elegant, and suits all climates. Women can get a fine cotton shalwar kamis outfit very cheaply.

Holy places must be entered barefoot. You will be asked to take your shoes off at the door. Take warm socks with you in winter on such sightseeing tours, as you don’t get slippers at the gate. It is advisable to now put your *dupatta* over your head. You may take photos of any and all holy places although it is courteous to ask permission, but take care that you do not snap a passing woman by mistake!

Religious-minded men follow the example of the *mullah*, the priest, and sport a beard of any length. Many wear the white skull-cap that is used for prayer, on their heads all the time.

### **Customs and Rituals**

Customs and rituals occupy a dominant place in the heart, mind, time, and purse of every Pakistani.

Due to centuries of proximity, many Hindu rites and customs have been adopted by Muslims: the dowry system which weighs heavily on all parents and the burning of perfumed sticks at holy places are examples of such rituals.

Dogs are largely considered unclean. There may be servants who refuse to brush a pet dog. In the course of time, they might learn otherwise; if not, there is

no way to force them. Only a few urban families keep dogs as pets, but many keep huge dogs as guard dogs. They are mostly kept outside the main house (premises).

It is customary to precede a serious undertaking with the phrase “Bismillah”—in the name of God—and acknowledge a good outcome with “al-Hamdulillah”—praise be to God. Similarly in futuristic terms, the phrase used is “Inshallah,” meaning “God willing.”

## ISLAMIC LAW

As a result of colonial rule, the sub-continent has been under British Law for centuries, although the tribal groups in the Northwest Province had, and still follow, their own law, the Pakhtoonwali. With independence and the new sense of Islamic nationhood, it became necessary to follow the Islamic Laws as given in the Holy Koran. But due to the many sects and their different interpretations of the holy texts, there is no uniform opinion as to what exactly Islamic Law is. As God’s word cannot be tampered with, compromise is ruled out and each group considers its own version as the final word of God.

The government instituted the Council of Islamic Ideology whose task it is to find an interpretation that is acceptable to all groups. Since 1984, the Shariah Bill, the Islamic Law Bill, has been in existence. Islamic Law, for example, provides for cutting off the hand of a thief; but the few court verdicts giving this sentence could not be executed because doctors refused to carry them out.

Islamic Law provides for the death penalty for certain criminal offences. But mercy shown by the offended party is considered superior. Tribes settle their disputes by themselves; if a girl is dishonored or a relative killed, revenge may follow the evil-doer and he might be killed; but also, some hold that the offended girl may be killed, as the family cannot live with their name thus shamed. This system in some tribal or feudally dominated rural area is overwhelmingly considered vicious, and currently a

bill against this practice—called “Karo Kari”—is being debated in parliament.

## SOCIAL CUSTOMS

### THE FAMILY

It is hard for an American to appreciate how truly vital the family is in Pakistan. Not only does it sustain its individual members, it also gives them their identity. Listen to a conversation, for example, between two Lahoris who have just met, and you’ll hear each one carefully dropping bits of information that let the other know whom he’s dealing with. The family name itself often indicates where the family’s roots are. Because land and wealth have been synonymous, many families still maintain strong ties with their ancestral villages.

Influential relatives add to one’s social status as well. Prestige, after all, derives from access to power, and in Pakistan where decisions are on a more personal level, the ability to influence is especially valued. It is accepted and even expected that an important person will protect the interests of his family and see that his relatives and friends are given special considerations. Even one prestigious member can increase the status of the entire family.

The term “family” in Pakistan is used not only for parents and their children, but also includes grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Some of these relatives will live in the same house, but even if they don’t, the ties are much stronger than they are in the United States. Family is so important in Pakistan that Urdu has separate names for each of the relatives, male and female, including in-laws. The practice of arranging marriages between first cousins further solidifies family relationships.





**Orthodox women wear chadars to protect their modesty when they go outside the home.**

The eldest adult male is the head of the household, even if he is no longer the chief provider. He expects respect and obedience, and he usually gets it. Sons contribute a portion of their earnings for family expenses, and in turn are entitled to financial help as they need it. Household tasks such as cooking and caring for the children are the domain of the daughter-in-laws and unmarried daughters. Traditionally sons have remained in the household even after marriage to manage the family land or business, and to care for the aging parents, while daughters have joined the families of their husbands. It is unusual for a young married couple to set up their own household, although nowadays in urban areas there is a gradual trend in this direction.

Children benefit most of all in the extended family. Pakistanis love children and consider childhood a time of indulgence, so that children are included naturally in all family activities. Their needs are satisfied as they become apparent—children are fed

when they are hungry and sleep when tired, with little emphasis on schedules or discipline. Naughtiness is considered cute and some children seem spoiled by our standards. The mother-son relationship is particularly strong, but often a child will develop an attachment to an aunt or grandmother. It is a very secure world for the child, although it can end abruptly in those families where puberty signals adulthood.

Unlike the American family where children are encouraged to become independent, the Pakistani family is based on interdependence. The individual never really thinks of himself as a separate entity. Americans seem very self-centered by comparison, yet Pakistanis can seem too submissive to parental authority, even as adults. Perhaps this is because to be cut off from family, or worse, to be disowned, is a serious matter profoundly affecting an individual's life.

## **WOMEN**

Any discussion of women in Pakistan must begin with an explanation of “purdah.” The word itself means curtain, but “purdah” refers to a whole range of practices aimed at limiting the visibility of women in order to lessen their temptation to men. In its most conservative interpretation, “purdah” means that women are kept in virtual isolation, secluded in a separate part of the house, forbidden to be seen by any but their husbands and closest male relatives. “Purdah” is mainly observed in middle to lower middle-class families, who tend to be the most conservative segment of society. The very poor aren't able to afford the luxury of idle females, and the more well-to-do urban women are too educated and sophisticated to accept “purdah.” When orthodox women go outside the home, custom dictates that they be covered to protect their modesty. The most common coverings are the “burqa,” which consists of a long coat and a veil, and the “chadar,” which is a single piece of cloth so wrapped that it covers the head and body. Some men will insist that their women want “purdah,” that they feel uncomfortable outside the home. Not surprisingly,

those same women when questioned, usually reply that their husbands or the husbands' families require it.

Even when purdah is not practiced, the national dress, the "shalwar-kamiz" is very modest. It consists of loose pants, a long-sleeved tunic, and a "dupatta" or scarf. If the sari is worn, the midriff and back are discreetly covered. The outfits are anything but drab, however. Since clothing and jewelry are visible indicators of social status, Pakistani women tend to dress formally by our standards. Most American women wear pants during the day and long skirts or caftans for social evenings. A dress that reveals too much back or leg is considered provocative. Some western women feel that they attract less attention wearing a "shalwar-kamiz." While most Pakistanis are pleased to see a foreigner adopting their national dress, great care must be taken to wear it correctly. The "dupatta," for example, is an integral part of the outfit, not just an accent piece. A woman should try to be aware of styles worn by Pakistani women of corresponding age and status.

Increased educational opportunities are making an impact on women's rights in Pakistan, but it is still unusual to find many Muslim women employed outside the home, except as teachers or doctors for women. Nursing is a low-status profession. Now with expanding educational opportunities for women, things are changing for the better, and women are joining other professions in great number, and are quite visible in a variety of other careers. Nevertheless, marriage and family remain the primary goals of many women, and a good education enhances a woman's marriage prospects.

It would seem that the ideal Pakistani woman is modest, faithful, and unassuming, epitomized by the beautiful young bride submissively trailing her husband with downcast eyes. But converging on this image is the women of Urdu films and Punjabi folk tales, who is sensual, clever, and always able to outwit her man. In reality, the Punjabi matriarch is formidable: she runs the household, supervises the kitchen, manages the family money, and wields

enormous influence behind the scenes in family decisions.

## CHILDREN

Children are the treasured possessions of the parents, particularly boys, as they are their old-age insurance. The difference between boys and girls is a factor in their upbringing at a very young age. Many more girls die of illness or malnutrition than boys under the age of five. Together with a little girl's growth in strength and understanding grow her duties: she is hardly six or seven when she runs errands and carries and comforts the latest baby.

To slap a little boy even when he screams his head off is considered cruel. The child, it is argued, does not know better and must therefore be given everything he wants. Thus, sex-roles are driven home from infancy. In Punjabi, there are lullabies for boys, not for girls. More than double the number of boys attend school as compared to girls.

Small children are addressed by the male gender—the terms of endearment are also male. The term "Bayta" (son) is used for both girls and boys.

There is child labor in Pakistan, as in many developing countries. The poor send their little ones to earn their daily bread as they have hardly anything to feed them on. The most common are the boys of about ten washing cars and assisting mechanics, or serving in small restaurants, while the girls of eight carry the babies of the well-to-do and do the simpler chores in the kitchen.

Children who attend prep schools and study in English medium schools know all the famous English nursery rhymes. The television is making a laudable effort to



**Pakistanis love children and consider childhood a time of indulgence.**



produce and teach children Urdu songs and rhymes. The toy industry is in a rudimentary stage and struggling. Products have to be cheap and are often so shoddy that they break on slightest impact. Only few can afford even these.

There is one rule that applies to all children whether rich or poor: obedience to elders. Children will not speak back or argue, they will follow instructions minutely, be of help and attend to guests.

There are some ten year olds who are perfect hostesses and conversationalists—and execute all the orders of their elders. And “elders” start with the elder brother and sister. It is often debated among children what has more advantages and less disadvantages, to be the eldest child or the youngest.

Schools have no real discipline problems. The teacher wields such authority over the students that he or she is revered throughout life.

## SERVANTS

One of the more seductive aspects of life in Pakistan is the availability of affordable household help. Most American families will employ at least one person to shop, cook, clean, or babysit. The lack of supermarkets and convenience foods, increased entertainment responsibilities, and generally larger homes all contribute to the need for a servant. However, the addition of a servant to the household is not always an easy adjustment.

The most common problem Americans have with their servants is over-familiarity. Social distance between servants and members of the household is very pronounced. A servant does not expect to be a friend. Servants do not have “live-in” arrangements. Most urban middle/upper-class houses have separate, (semi-)detached rooms for servants. These are called “servant quarters.”

A servant’s self-respect depends to a large extent on his respect for his employer. To do his job well he needs a clear idea of what you expect from him.

Being too casual or vague might give him the impression that you don’t care how things are done. On the other hand, being overly solicitous or dependent could give him an exaggerated view of his own importance.

The fact that most servants are male can be disconcerting for some American women. And language can contribute to problems too. Whether it stems from a lack of confidence in their ability to deal with servants, or from a genuine concern for the servant’s social condition, there are bound to be misunderstandings. So, in dealing with your servants, it is best to explain clearly and simply what you want done, and show your appreciation for a job that has been done well. The most successful employer/employee relationships are based on mutual respect.

## FRIENDSHIP

Americans see themselves as friendly, outgoing people, but the expectations of friendship can vary considerably from culture to culture. Even a casual acquaintance may feel free to drop by unannounced or to request favors. You might be asked very personal questions about your home or salary that you consider an invasion of your privacy. Friendship in Pakistan involves being able to make demands on time and privacy; the concept of “imposing” on a friend simply does not exist. At times, great tact is required, particularly if you value the friendship. Take a cue from your friends themselves who rarely use the word no. It just isn’t polite to refuse anyone to his face, even if there is no intention of obliging.

## STATUS/CASTE

The newcomer will very quickly see that society in Pakistan is split into different groups. Some are of a religious and sectarian nature; these the visitor may ignore in the context of his social relationship with them. Many are of caste and tribal affiliation; these, too, can remain outside the foreigner’s concern. Very many are of economic nature—and here we come very close to the type of



**Members of villages comprise a unique class in Pakistan, different than that of modern urban centers, who behave like their counterparts in all other countries.**

groups the outsider will have to deal with in his daily life: the class system which dictates behavior, lifestyle expectations, profession, marriages and careers. This is a legacy of the centuries' old interaction with Hindu society of the united India days and does hardly exist in other Muslim states as Islam is egalitarian.

Comprising the lowest class are the sweepers. In cities, they live in ghetto-like settlements consisting of mud huts. The sweeper comes to your home daily for floor cleaning; in less-developed areas, he will also empty the pot of the commode—the toilet system that the British colonists preferred before flush toilets came to the country. He or she will not touch anything except furniture and nobody touches him unless he is ill. He does not expect it either. When he is thirsty, he will drink (hopefully chilled) water from an old tin, or a glass reserved only for him/her.

The sweepers are mostly Christians. On Christmas night, they go through the streets singing carols. They are given monetary gifts by their various masters, which should make them happy on this one great day of the year. If you do not want to be disturbed in the middle of the night you give him or her your Christmas gift the morning before Christmas. Nobody will then come near your house. Some masters like to invite them into the hall to sing, and treat them to cookies and sweets.

Your cook, gardener, *chowkidar* (watchman), driver (both at home and in your office) and the messenger boy all stand on the next rung up the social ladder. You address them all by their personal name (Yusuf Masih means Joseph the Christian and you call him Yusuf) without the Mr. or Mrs.

In recent years, due to mass migration to oil-rich countries, skilled labor has become a rare commodity.

Artisans are normally quite well off, though the trend still persists to go home and spend the earnings of two weeks' labor. If you need a workman, get him first on a trial basis; anyone who has ever felled a tree calls himself a carpenter.

If you call a dignified, older, or efficient workman with the English appellation Mr., it is accepted as the highest compliment and often promotes the quality of work. Locally such persons would be called "Mistry Sahib" (Mr. Artisan).

In most households the workman gets a cup of tea and biscuits during the morning and in the afternoon. Exercise caution in terms of leaving your possessions unattended.

At the skilled, professional level, the class system is beginning to break down. People with modern professions like nurses, office assistants, secretaries, technicians, are persons you shake hands with and invite to a cup of tea with you. You always use Mr., Mrs., or Miss when addressing them. They may refuse a tip or reward for a job well done or for an extra errand, but they do need it and are too proud to let you know. Conceal it as a gift for the child or a cloth length for the wife, and always see the person to the door. You are the master, but here it is accepted for you to smile.

There are some Christians who are professionals: teachers, doctors, lawyers, and the like. They hold social status equal to Muslims in these professional lines. They prefer to speak English and often the women wear western dress. In many ways, they identify with the British. While they can rise professionally and socially, there are parameters within which they operate, and there is no such thing as a Christian Choudry or Khan.

Members of the modern urban society behave quite like their counterparts in all other countries. People like to be introduced by name and title, even if it is one of a private welfare organization: "Mrs. Akbar, she is the General Secretary of our teachers' 'Sunshine Committee.'" If you (a man) visit middle-

class homes in small towns or old parts of the city, be ready to eat the meal that is specially cooked for you, all alone or at best, together with the master of the house; women prepare the meals and tradition has it that they often eat after the male head of the family anyway.

## SOCIAL OCCASIONS— PRIVATE

The country offers the most exciting entertainment when it comes to outings into nature, history, archaeology, palaeontology, and so on. But when it comes to entertainment in the cities, there is very little choice; you mostly depend on your own resources or on friends. Therefore, friends meet frequently and guests are invited regularly. Sometimes, this means that a person has two or three dinner invitations for the same evening. He will then attend perhaps two of them for one or two hours each.

In smaller towns it is still customary to "drop in," to visit neighbors and friends at the end of an evening stroll or drive. This visiting is mostly very rewarding, as it is totally informal. You may sip a cup of tea together and discuss what you like.

Pakistani parties are often somewhat stiff and follow a fixed pattern. Guests arrive about 10 minutes to one hour late for a private dinner. Among certain social groups particularly in Karachi, a party may start 3 hours late. You need to mind read your host to make sure that you don't arrive at a time when the caterers are just unloading the dining tables. A hostess should plan parties for nights when there is no English film program on TV, or for a time when a popular TV program is over. Guests will not consider they have any commitment to the host but will only pursue their own maximum pleasure, which may mean three functions per night.

Official engagements and functions also begin late. Ministers and other functionaries of the state, more often than not, come about one hour or more late to an inauguration, speech, dinner, or show, and are trendsetters for a society that loves to demonstrate wealth and power in public. Don't believe for a minute that the other guests are upset over the late arrival of the chief guest. Where you would leave after a wait of 30 minutes, people here accept the situation—and imitate it!

Pakistanis tend to display an understanding of punctuality; when a foreigner invites Pakistanis for 8:00 p.m., they arrive almost on the dot. And when they, in turn, expect foreigners for dinner, they know that they had better be ready at 8:00 sharp.

You should arrive late at a wedding. Unless you are a member of one of the bridal couple's families or close enough to them to share in the hullabaloo, it is better to arrive at least one hour late; that will reduce your sitting ordeal of 4–6 hours by at least 60 minutes. And that goes on not for one, but two or three days or more. A wedding reception in a hotel hardly lasts longer than three hours. But if you attend such a ceremony in a village you must be prepared to give it the whole day. Therefore, it's wise to arrive at about 1:00 p.m. when lunch will be served.

Normally, you are invited to a party by a printed card. For a reception, do not rely totally on the "RSVP" or "Regrets only"; invitees may not regret and not show up or keep silent and then turn up. Generally, the number of guests evens out.

On occasions for which you receive a formal invitation, men will mostly come in a tie, or in shalwar kamis, the baggy trousers with the shirt over it. For this outfit, you need a smart waistcoat. When the invitation card says "Dress formal," you had better don your dark suit. For formal invitations, as in the west, women should wear a formal dress, not necessarily full length but not tight fitting. A popular and elegant choice is to wear a sari—it takes practice to put one on and wear it, but is well worth the effort.

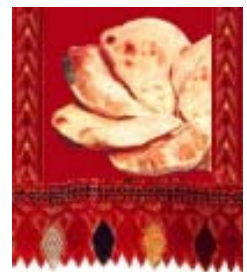
Weddings are the occasions when women may indulge in their finest and most expensive wear, with plenty of jewelry, extravagant hairstyles and sophisticated make-up. The finery and display are unbelievable and unmatched. Rest assured that the other women inspect you as closely (and always benevolently) as they scrutinize each other—not so benevolently—and can recount after a month what every woman wore that evening.

While the illiterates in villages do not know the exact dates of birth of their children—"Ashraf was born after the holy month of Ramadan" or after the first/second war with India, when Bhutto became President—modern city dwellers celebrate their darlings' birthdays with great fanfare. The kids are dressed in their best clothes. When they have handed over their birthday gift, they are entertained under fancy buntings, colored lights and balloons, to puppet shows, rides on and dances by hired camels, varieties of cakes and other goodies and take-home gifts. Often, all classmates are invited plus the neighborhood. Mothers who bring their children may stay on so that a large group of ladies forms a substantial aspect of the party. Note, though, that birthday parties are confined to well-to-do families. Poor families simply can't afford them.

## HOME VISITS

Food is synonymous with hospitality. If you are passing a neighbor's house, you may be invited in for tea; should you drop in on a friend, you will be offered tea or a soft drink; and if a friend invites you for lunch or dinner, you can expect a real feast.

The most convenient time of day for a casual visit is late afternoon. Lunch is usually the main meal of the day, followed by a rest period, and dinner is eaten late, so you won't be intruding if you drop by between five and seven in the evening. Most likely, tea will be served. It is taken British-style



**Naan is a staple of a Pakistani meal.**



with milk and sugar, so if you prefer it plain you'll have to say so. In many homes, the female guest is invited to pour the tea. The method is to place a teaspoon of sugar in the cup, add the tea poured through a strainer, and stir in the milk. It might be a good idea to schedule your own dinner time later, so that your friends will feel more comfortable about visiting you at home.

Dinner invitations are generally for 8:00 p.m., but the meal isn't usually served until about 10:00, or even later if it is a large party. You don't have to show up on time, but it is nice to offer a plausible excuse if you are very late. The visiting is done before dinner, and although prohibition is officially in force, you will probably be offered a drink. Most likely, it will be whiskey (Scotch) or gin, which are purchased at exorbitant rates on the black market. Beer, wine, and mixed drinks are difficult to obtain. A person who smokes invariably offers cigarettes to those nearest him before lighting his own.

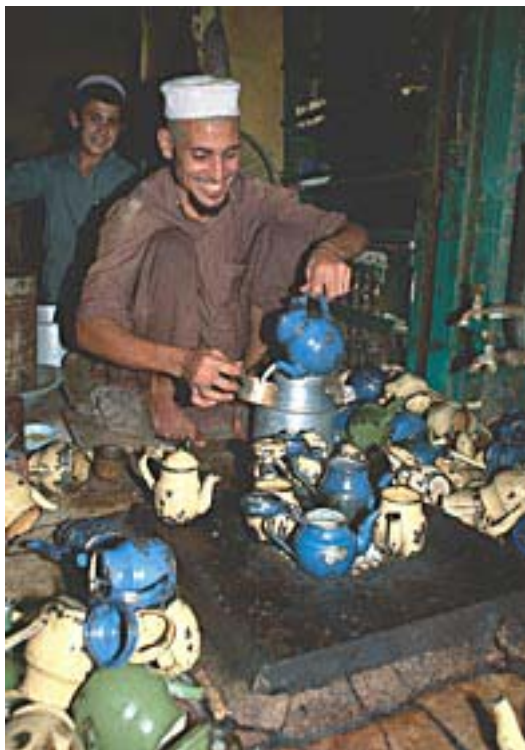
Men don't always bring their wives along to social evenings, and the women who do come tend to sit together in one corner of the room. This is liable to prove very frustrating for American women, and remarks suggesting that they might feel more comfortable with the ladies only compound the issue. At times like these it helps to remember that relationships between men and women in Pakistan are very formal. Boldness or familiarity on the part of a western woman can be easily misunderstood. When invited to a home where the women observe purdah, the female guest should visit with the women in their part of the house for a little while, then rejoin the men for food.

Dinner may be served at the table or buffet style; in either case, it will probably be a feast with several meat dishes (no pork), mounds of rice, salads, yogurt, and "naan" or bread. You will get a plate along with a fork and soup spoon, and you will help yourself to the dishes nearest you. Don't worry about trying to fill up your plate all at once with a little of each dish;

everything eventually makes its way around the table. At a buffet, you stay close to the table, moving on to sample other dishes when you've finished with the ones in reach. You don't talk much during the meal. Eating with your fingers and using your "naan" to scoop up food are perfectly acceptable; so is belching after a meal and using a toothpick. What isn't considered polite, however, is blowing your nose, even discreetly, into a handkerchief.

The hostess may not be present for the meal, preferring to supervise the kitchen, but if she is, she probably won't eat with you, since she considers it her duty to see that the guests get enough to eat. The host, too, will continually press you to

have more food, even to the point of putting more on your plate in spite of your protests. Try to eat at least a little of what seconds he may serve you. When you've eaten your fill, a compliment and several refusals should convince them—some people even leave a little food on their plates to ward off refills. At a buffet, you dispose of your plate by placing it on or under the table. You may be asked if you want to wash your hands and often there is a small sink in the dining room for that purpose. Most guests leave soon after coffee and tea have been served. It is polite to ask your host's "ijaazat" or permission to go.



**This Pakistani in Peshawar partakes in tea time, serving the most common drink for all occasions.**

At this point, note that verbal invitations are issued freely and sincerely in Pakistan. Issuing the invitation is often as good as actually having you over, so it is wise to wait for more specific information such as date and time. It won't be taken badly if you can't go, so long as you offer a plausible excuse. To refuse anyone's offer of hospitality with a flat no or a weak excuse would be very rude. Invitations aren't given with the idea that they should be returned. However, once you have accepted someone's hospitality, he may feel that he is in a better position to ask a favor of you. Generally speaking, it is good insurance to be on the giving end in a relationship.

## GIFTS

To express gratitude to your host, you may bring flowers, a cake, a box of sweetmeats, or dried fruit. But if you go to spend a weekend with friends, you take a large basket with fruits or dried fruit, a piece of embroidery, a table cloth, or such a present. Before you leave after a happy weekend there, make sure the servants of the house participate in your happiness in the form of a good tip.

Pakistanis are always happy when a foreigner attends a family wedding. Your "Mubarak" (congratulations) to the families of the bride and groom and your admiration of the bride and the wedding arrangements and meal will long be remembered. Casual wedding guests are not expected to bring a gift; your presence is considered an honor for the whole family. But if you wish, you may take a gift:

anything from table cloths, towels, decorative ornaments to handbags, cosmetic sets or suit-pieces, you have endless choice. Hand your gift (with a card on it) to the lady who receives you or ask her to whom you should give it. Pakistanis often give cash gifts in an envelope; this is not expected of foreigners but again if you wish, you may do this.

## WEDDINGS



**A bride is brought out in front of the guests with eyes modestly downcast and with an appropriately somber expression.**

Weddings are significant social events. Love marriages are not unheard of, but most marriages are arranged, for it is through marriage that a family publicly affirms and attempts to improve its social and economic standing. As in the United States, it is the bride's family that bears the expense of the celebration; but that burden is

often much more crucial to the couple's marital success.

Sons usually remain with the family for life, and it is their right to inherit the family land or business. Daughters, however, join the families of their husbands, so traditionally take their share of the family wealth at the time of marriage, in the form of jewelry, clothing, and household items. A careful tab is kept by relatives of both sides: the dowry is often displayed, the house covered with colored lights, food and drinks served to the guests, and presents distributed to the immediate relatives. Although there are legal limits placed on expenditures for dowries and wedding feasts, it can cause the bride





**Guests celebrate the consummation of a marriage at a Valima put on by the groom's family.**

lifelong bitterness if her family is thought to have skimmed in any way. Small wonder that the celebration is often lavish beyond the means of the family, particularly among the middle class. It is a common practice to arrange marriages between first cousins, which lessens the social pressure to go into debt, and keeps the wealth safely within the family. If all this seems very unromantic, it may help to realize that both the bride and the groom were raised to expect love and companionship to develop after the marriage.

The wedding invitation you receive will list several functions, sometimes spanning several days. If you are invited by the groom's family, you will want to attend the "sehrabundi/baraat." These ceremonies are the preparation of the bridegroom and the procession to the bride's house. This is the way the groom's family can show their social might by the number and importance of their guests. One of the

nicest rituals on the bride's side is the "mehndi" or preparation of the bride. It is primarily for women and includes singing and the application of henna to the hands. If you are a close friend of the family, you may want to bring a gift. Cash is appreciated—the bills should be new and given in an uneven amount, such as Rs 101; the extra rupee is for good luck.

Marriage is a social contract, not a sacrament. You may be disappointed to discover that there is no one ceremony after which the couple are man and wife. The "nikah" or wedding contract is signed by the bride and groom in the presence of a Muslim priest and several witnesses. After the nikah is signed, the guests are served refreshments, men on one side and women on the other. If the bride does not observe purdah, she may be brought out for the guests to see, eyes modestly downcast, careful not to laugh (a wedding is a sad time for the bride because she must

leave her family), and mostly laden with jewelry. The women guests will dress in their finest silks and jewelry. Keep this in mind when you are trying to decide what to wear. A buffet dinner may then be served. In a city wedding the final event of the evening is the “rukhsati,” the bride’s farewell to her family. This does not end the festivities, however. The following day the groom’s family hosts the “valima,” which celebrates the consummation of the marriage. Again the guests gather for food and drink. In the case of a village wedding for which some guests have traveled great distances, there is a tendency to celebrate over three or four days.

It should be mentioned that while divorce is permitted in Islam, it is a very serious matter. Under Pakistani law a man must formally announce his intention to divorce, then agree to wait 90 days, during which time counseling takes place. A woman cannot initiate divorce unless she has been given that right in the marriage contract. If all attempts at reconciliation fail, then the divorce is considered complete. A woman who has been divorced will find remarriage in Pakistan very difficult, if not impossible, because of the disgrace. Polygamy is a social custom that is regulated by statute in Pakistan. Should a man decide to take a second wife, his first wife must agree. In addition, the Koran is very specific about the duties and responsibilities of a man toward his wives; the wives must be treated evenhandedly and not discriminated against.

## BIRTHS

Children complement a marriage and solidify the bride’s position in her new family. It is auspicious to have a child within the first year of marriage, and sons are particularly valued. The family will celebrate the occasion as they do any happy event, by distributing sweets to their relatives and friends. You

should take a gift for the baby, or cash (new notes in an uneven amount) when you visit for the first time. It is better not to gush over the new baby or excessively praise a particular feature, so as not to excite the “evil eye.” Babies are kept carefully swaddled, and placed on their backs with a small pillow under the head, which is believed to hasten the flattening of the head. After 40 days, the baby’s head may be shaved to improve the quality of the hair. This is also an important rite, to be tied in with name-giving.



A ta'weez, or sacred charm, is given to a new mother to protect her child against all evil.

The birth of a male heir is heralded with pride and often rifle shots, which at times may stretch beyond the means of the poor parents. But the parents feel that the heir will look after his parents in their old age and so from the day he is born, he is pampered and spoiled. A daughter is a burden and the parents often take her as a responsibility with which they have to live. This archaic thinking has hardly changed among the poor people of this country and even the educated are not free of it. You will generally hear from parents how desperately they are looking for a suitable match, to marry off their daughter. The

responsibility for a daughter ends with her wedding.

When a son is born in a family, the father will rush off to a sweetmeat shop and buy *luddus*, a sweet that is distributed at the birth of the child. These sweets are packed into little colorful boxes, and the father will go to the homes of all his relatives and friends and distribute the sweets personally and announce the arrival of his heir. This custom is mostly prevalent in the Punjab. The friends and relatives respond by visiting the proud parents, admiring the heir, and placing some money in the hands of the child. Happiness must be shared so, if the parents can afford it, they will get some food cooked and distribute it among the poor. If he happens to be the first child in the family, the parents will do all they can to guard him against all illnesses. If the mother is a religious person and has been praying for the birth of a son at the shrine of a saint, she will rush off there as soon as she is able to and thank the saint for her good fortune, and will take a gift of sweets or a set of clothes to give to the keeper of the shrine. She will also get a *ta'weez* (a sacred charm to protect the child against all evil) from a saintly person (you would be surprised at the number of such saintly persons that exist in this country) to tie around the child's arm and neck. Most children wear such charms throughout their lives and strongly believe in their protecting powers.

When the child, be it male or female, is born, the first sound it is supposed to hear is the Muslims' call for prayer (the *azaan*). The honor of reciting this to the child is generally given to the eldest male member of the family or the *maulvi* who is specially called in for this occasion. The first thing that the child is supposed to taste is honey, mixed with a bit of pure butter fat which is shaped into tiny balls and then put carefully into the newborn child's mouth.

The arrival of a daughter is not usually heralded with the same signs of happiness as that of a son. In fact the father is often apologetic in his announcement. Sweets are distributed but on a limited scale. A

daughter is treated as a second-class citizen from the day she arrives. She does all the menial work for the family and helps her mother in the household. The parents try to save from their meagre means to get a suitable dowry together to marry the daughter off. Her opinion is never asked. Schooling will only be provided if the parents can afford it. Even the well-to-do think that their ultimate responsibility is finding a suitable match for their daughter. Very few women have been able to break out of these chains and find careers of their choice. Even till this day there are very few women who find employment.

Circumcision is an important ceremony in the life of a Muslim boy, and is traditionally performed when the child is 2 to 5 years old. Nowadays this task is performed by the doctor on the newborn baby while the mother and child are still in the hospital. But this is only true for the educated class. The illiterate and poorer class still believe in having this ceremony performed when the child is older.

The whole family or village is invited for the ceremony. A huge meal is prepared by the village barber, who is the chef on all occasions and is also responsible for performing the circumcision. The child is dressed in his best clothes that may be specially made for the occasion. After all the guests have gathered the child is brought out by the father, and in front of the entire gathering, the barber performs the task. The child is wrapped up and returned to the mother for solace, while the guests are invited to partake in the feast. The guests on departing give some money to the child. In more educated families, the feast is held at any suitable time after the actual circumcision has taken place.

## DEATHS

Deaths are probably the most ritualized events in any culture. The ritual helps the individual cope with the loss of a loved one and eases the family's way back to normal life. The concept of an afterlife is strongly believed in Islam. In death, all men stand equal before God, bereft of worldly

# FESTIVALS

DATE	ENGLISH NAME	LOCAL NAME
March 23	<b>Pakistan Day</b> <i>Commemorates Pakistan becoming a republic</i>	Yaum e Pakistan
May 1	<b>May Day</b> <i>Labor Day in Pakistan</i>	-
August 14	<b>Independence Day</b> <i>Commemorates Pakistan's independence from the United Kingdom</i>	Yaum e Azadi
September 6	<b>Defense Day</b> <i>Commemorates the military's role in defense of Pakistan</i>	Yaum e Difa
September 11	<b>Death anniversary of Muhammad Ali Jinnah</b> <i>Led the movement to found Pakistan as a separate Muslim country</i>	-
December 25	<b>Christmas and birthday of Muhammad Ali Jinnah</b>	-
date varies	<b>Eid-ul-Adha</b> <i>Commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, occurs on the 10th day of the month of Zil Hajj</i>	Bari ("big") Eid
date varies	<b>Eid-ul-Fitr</b> <i>Commemorates end of Ramadan, or "Ramzan" as it is known here</i>	Choti ("little") Eid

wealth and titles. Even the Moghul emperors and revered holy men are buried in simple earthen graves under those magnificent monuments.

After a person dies, the body is washed, placed in a shroud, then viewed by family and friends. Burial must take place before the next sundown, and only the male relatives and friends accompany the body to the cemetery. If the deceased was a close friend, or the relative of a close friend, you will call on the family before the burial to offer your condolences. You need only stay briefly, 10 or 15 minutes sitting quietly with the family should be sufficient. Flowers and sympathy cards are inappropriate—it is your presence that is important. Unlike the United States, both men and women grieve openly and linger over the details of the death. After burial, quiet mourning

continues for 40 days, during which time the family does not entertain or attend social functions. Death anniversaries are observed privately in some families, and publicly in the case of important national figures and saints.

## FESTIVALS

The Muslim year is made up of 12 lunar months which means that religious holidays have no fixed dates in our calendar. The annual holiday season is preceded by a month of fasting called "Ramzan." Complete abstinence from food and water is observed from sunrise to sunset, followed by an elaborate meal at sunset, called "iftar." Families generally rise at three in the morning to eat again before sunrise. Most restaurants are closed during



the day, and to avoid giving offense, it is a good idea for Westerners not to eat in public.

“Eid-ul-Fitr,” celebrated at the end of “Ramzan,” begins at the mosques with morning prayers. The rest of the day is spent visiting friends, taking boxes of sweets and gifts. Employers give their employees an “Eid” bonus and it is customary for you to give “eidee” to your Muslim servants (Christians will want theirs at Christmas); also, be prepared to hand out a few rupees to the mailman, and anyone else who regularly performs a service.

Six weeks later, “Eid-ul-Azha” or “bakra eid” commemorates the readiness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael. Any family that can will purchase a sheep, goat, or cow; have it slaughtered on “eid” morning, and distribute it among friends and neighbors. There is the oft-repeated anecdote about the mutton leg that went from house to house finally ending up on the table it came from. But the sentiment behind the sacrifice and sharing is genuine. “Eid-ul-Azha” is also the time of year for making the pilgrimage to Mecca, or “Haj.” Slaughter can be performed in the following two days as well.

Another religious event is “Muharrum,” a Shia ritual which mourns the death of Imam Hussain, the last grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. A friend may invite you to join him for the pre-dawn prayers and chanting, followed by a day-long procession through the city. Young men, caught up in the frenzy of the moment will gather at street corners and flog themselves with tiny steel blades attached to wooden handles. Because of the crowds, the procession is best viewed from above street level. The most delightful secular holiday, formerly celebrated exclusively in Lahore but now spreading to other cities as well, is “Basant.” It is an entire day in February set aside for flying kites in honor of spring. Special food is prepared, “keema paratha,” young girls wear yellow, and the sky is filled with multicolored kites of every shape and size. Kite-flying in South Asia involves great skill, since the object is to maneuver your kite in such a way that your string, which has been carefully prepared with ground glass, cuts the line of another kite. It is a festival celebrated

with great enthusiasm by the entire family, and the view from the roof of a house in the old city is particularly impressive.

## SOCIAL OCCASIONS— PUBLIC

### PERFORMING ARTS

In the slow lifestyles of the Subcontinent, drama has only come up recently. There are rudimentary efforts by theater groups, but hardly any public theater halls exist. The state-controlled television and the private film industry adopted and developed drama in two diverse directions. Films are largely vulgar, melodramatic, and artificial. Television has taken a different course. The dramas depict many socio-cultural issues, such as the struggle of women, and criticize social behavior. Even though you won’t understand a single word, seeing a drama on television is a worthwhile study of the Pakistani way of life, moods, and customs.

The classical music of the Subcontinent dates back to the early Middle Ages. It is a system of highest sophistication and requires a separate book to explain the basics. In most cases the ear that is not used to this type of music takes quite some time to be able to appreciate it.

Again, concerts are largely private affairs. It is rare that an organization arranges a classical music program in a hotel hall or auditorium of a college or company. The big cities have music societies that hold regular recitals. To attend, you need to be a member and need to know the right people to get in. Young beat-groups organize “shows” on western lines. Fashion shows are run by boutiques, mostly in hotels. You need to find out where to buy a ticket.

Organizers of exhibitions have lists of art lovers whom they invite.

## RESTAURANTS

While most socializing is still done in the home, restaurants are becoming more popular, especially for business-related entertaining. There is usually no problem attracting the waiter's attention. You order several dishes which are passed around the table. Because of Prohibition, liquor is not available, and you don't bring your own along. When the bill comes, it is usually paid by one person—there can be a good deal of friendly bickering about who gets the privilege of treating, but generally the one who issued the invitation ends up paying the bill. Tipping is expected, but it is not necessary to give ten percent of the check.



**This young boy's facial decorations indicate the world-famous cricket rivalry between Pakistan and India.**

## CINEMAS

Going to the cinema is a popular family outing mostly for the urban low income families; even babies are taken along. (Those belonging to the middle and upper socio-economic strata watch Indian and English-language movies at home.) For a first-run film, it is a good idea to purchase tickets in advance. Seat numbers are written on the tickets; the best seats are those farthest away from the screen—dress circle and the boxes in the balcony. The orchestra seats are almost exclusively male and can get pretty raucous, depending on the film. Many Americans never see an Urdu film while they are in Lahore or other cities. It is a mistake, because Lahore

is the Hollywood of Pakistan: film songs are played everywhere, and movie stars are important personalities. Don't worry about the incomprehensibility of the dialogue, because the plots are really simple.

Despite tense relations with India, Indian movies are popular in Pakistan. Ironically, Indian films are officially illegal, but they can easily be found across Pakistan. An indigenous movie industry exists in

Pakistan, and is known as Lollywood, producing over 40 feature-length films a year.

## MUSIC

Music is also very popular in Pakistan, and ranges from traditional styles (such as Qawwali) to more modern groups that try to fuse traditional Pakistani music with western music. Public music concerts are a blend

of Western and traditional music. They cater mostly to the younger generation.

## SPORTS

Perhaps the most popular sport in Pakistan is cricket, and large numbers of Pakistanis gather around TV sets to watch the Pakistani team play in world competitions, especially against Pakistan's rival India. Pakistan has one of the top teams in international cricket, one that won the World Cup in 1992. Field hockey is also an important sport in Pakistan, Pakistan having won the gold medal at the Olympics a number of times in the sport. Football





**American and Pakistani business practices appear the same on the surface, but the American should be aware of crucial differences.**

or soccer is played in Pakistan as well, but is not as popular as cricket or field hockey. Polo is believed to have originated in the northern parts of Pakistan, and continues to be an important sport there with large competitions throughout the year.

## IN THE WORKPLACE

### OFFICE ETIQUETTE

Business is conducted with the same hospitality one finds in a Pakistani home. Tea and soft drinks are invariably served and should be accepted. No need to trouble yourself looking through files or collecting forms, the appropriate papers will be brought to you. But don't expect undivided attention: in Pakistan, there is no such thing as a private interview. The lowly office assistant has a good deal of power—he ushers people in and out, brings in the files, gets the signatures, and passes the papers on. Be sure to use your title (or your spouse's), for it may mean less delay. Business cards are useful, although it is better not to include your home address

and phone unless you specifically want that person to have it. Office hours are usually from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., but you'll be more likely to find your man in between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

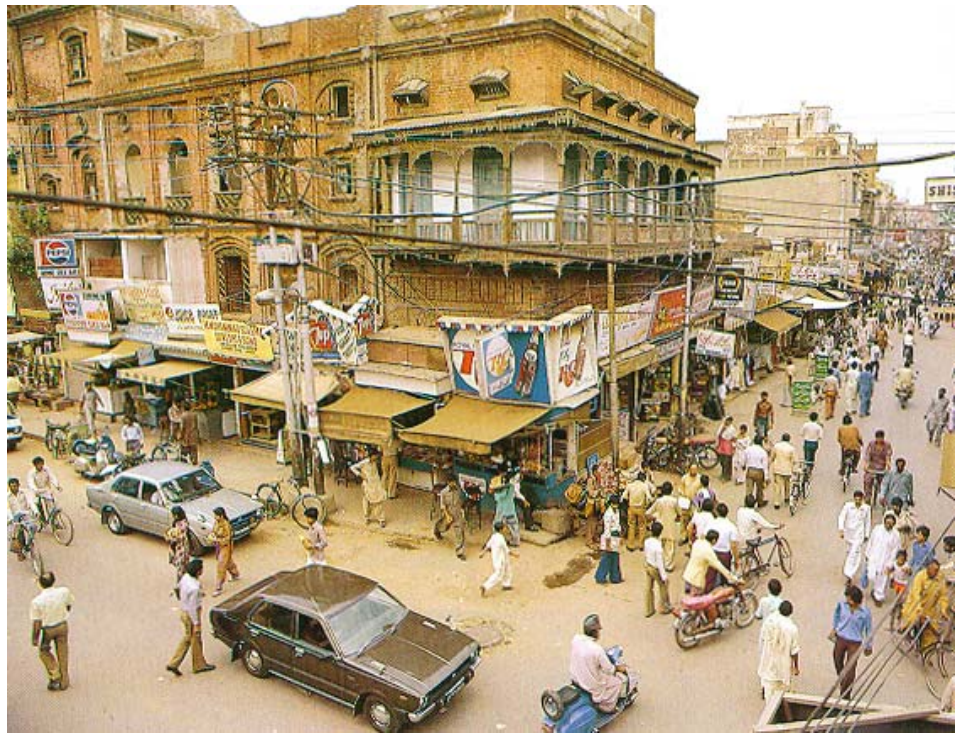
The bureaucratic system often appears chaotic, and time is definitely *not* money, as it is in the West. As a holdover from colonial days, an official has a great deal of authority if he chooses to exercise it. Conversely, there are all sorts of rules and regulations to tie his hands if he doesn't want to help. Anger or insults won't budge a bureaucrat, but an appeal to his goodwill or sense of fairplay can be successful. Remember, however, that having been granted a special favor or consideration, you may owe one.

For the American in charge of Pakistani employees, there are a few cultural differences that should be noted. Detailed job descriptions can be useful because initiative and ambition have not traditionally been rewarded, and the employee may feel more comfortable if he knows exactly what is expected of him. It also helps to be aware of differences in status, so as not to embarrass an employee by asking him to do a task he considers beneath him. Errors should be corrected politely and in private. Generally speaking, office procedures are somewhat old-fashioned, that is, more personalized and less efficient.

### WORK

One of the first questions an American will ask after "who are you" and "where are you from" is "what do you do?" Work is an important indicator of social status and education; in many cases the job is a vital part of the person's ego as well. This is true to some extent in Pakistan: a man's job does indicate his status, and titles are freely used. The significant difference is an attitudinal one: we believe in the dignity of work, but a Pakistani works only if he has no one else to do it for him. The status of a job increases in direct proportion to its distance from physical effort, and the ideal is to not have to work at all.

Rural Punjab and Sindh are basically feudal societies with carefully delineated and reciprocal responsibilities for landlord and peasant. The system there has adapted itself to urban life and is still a determining factor in employer/employee relationships. Reflecting the strength of the extended family in the village, businesses in the city tend to be family owned and run; management jobs are found for the sons-in-law and nephews. Money earned is family property to be pooled for a sister's wedding, a son's education, or a cousin's operation. There is a strong sense of communal responsibility, so that village ties remain binding, even for the family that has been in the city for several generations.



**Shopping is a hugely popular pastime in places like Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar.**

degrading; rather it is a perfectly acceptable means to a desired end.

In addition to wealth, a family tries to accumulate influence, which is called "safaarish" in Urdu. Safaarish can be used to win a favorable verdict in court, to clinch a business deal, to get one's children into school, and even to buy cloth in the market at a bargain rate. You are who you know. But influence must be carefully cultivated through gifts and reciprocal favors. As in social situations, it is good insurance to have done a few favors and be "owed one." For the westerner untrained in the game, there can be some uncomfortable situations. For example, a woman may be asked to use her safaarish with her husband to get a Pakistani friend's niece a visa to the United States. A lecture on the separation of home and office is meaningless—chances are the friend was being pressured by relatives to use her safaarish, and by making the request, fulfilled her duty to them. Safaarish isn't seen as anything embarrassing or

## DAILY LIFE

### SHOPPING

Shopping is a hugely popular pastime for most Pakistanis. The cities of Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Islamabad, Faisalabad, and Quetta are especially known for the great contrast in shopping experiences—from burgeoning bazars to modern multi-story shopping malls. In particular, Lahore and Karachi are peppered with colourful plazas that house hundreds of technology shops. Most of these are small stores, offering mind-boggling bargains and repair services for almost any computer or technology product. The tech enthusiast finds



**There is a serious shortage of motor rickshaws throughout Pakistan.**

everything from the latest mobile phones, to extremely inexpensive CDs and DVDs. Lahore's most famous tech-bazaar is the Hafeez Center, located on the Gulberg Main Boulevard.

Like most older cities, Lahore has some intriguing bazaars. The Anarkali Bazaar is one of the most famous. The narrow streets of the old city are lined with shops and stalls selling all sorts of local products. You'll find food in one section, cloth in another, and crockery in a third, leading you to wonder how anyone can make a profit with such keen competition. As you walk along, you are urged to stop and have a look—it's a hard-sell approach that is maddeningly persistent. Should you decide to enter a shop, you'll see the shopkeeper seated on the floor by the money box or behind the counter, and his assistants will begin pulling down merchandise before you've even said what you want. Don't feel compelled to buy just because they've gone to so much trouble to show you everything. That is the way you browse when there isn't the space to display the wares. If you are lucky enough to find something you like, buy it; you can't count on finding it again or ordering one like it, because it just won't be the same.

Lahoris often joke about their lack of business sense, and it does seem sometimes that a shopkeeper could

care less whether you buy or not. He quotes his price and points firmly to the fixed price sign when you try to bargain with him. While there are many shops, such as provisions stores, where bargaining isn't done, it doesn't hurt to make the attempt, and your position improves with the quantity you want to buy. Don't insult the man by offering him just half of his quoted price; twenty-five percent less would be more realistic. That gives him room to maneuver, anyway you can usually expect around a 15-percent discount. No matter what you end up paying, your Pakistani friends will tell you that it was too much. Try not to fall into the trap of believing that everyone is out to cheat you. If you are pleased with what you've bought and thought the price sounded reasonable at the time, then don't worry about being taken. Inflation has raised the prices of so many items that the prices your friends quote may already be a part of the "good old days."

Westerners still attract a good deal of attention in the bazaar, particularly western women. To avoid becoming a target of "eve-teasers," a woman should dress as inconspicuously as possible. Pants with a hip-covering blouse, or a "shalwar-kamiz" are both modest outfits. It also helps to know what is needed and where to find it; people who go about their business in a purposeful manner aren't usually harassed. Most of the pushing and shoving in a bazaar isn't deliberate. Americans are just used to having more space around them, and need to learn to move differently. If you are bothered, anger doesn't usually help the situation, since the idea is to provoke a reaction. Often someone will come to your defense; if not, forget it, but try to be more aware of potential troublemakers so you can avoid them in the future.

Begging seems to be on the increase in various cities of Pakistan, especially in the newer bazaars. Whether you give or not is, of course, your own decision, but there are a few things you should be aware of. Traditionally the less fortunate have been the responsibility of the family or the village, which provided them with necessities such as food and



clothing rather than money. Pakistanis still prefer this more personal form of charity. Foreigners, who are not a part of the social system, are more inclined to give a few rupees here and there. But this practice has given rise to a new breed of beggar, often surprisingly aggressive and blunt about how much is expected. So, think carefully before you give, particularly if you find yourself giving just to get rid of the person.

## TRANSPORTATION

Most Americans in Pakistan find it essential to have their own car. There is a serious shortage of taxis and motor rickshaws. Those that do exist often won't take you where you want to go, or will charge an exorbitant rate to do so. Although there are meters, it is best to settle the fare in advance. Some drivers will even demand a partial pre-payment, so they can buy the gas they'll need for the trip. Getting around the city by bus is even more frustrating—poor maintenance and the lack of a fixed timetable mean that the buses are crowded and unreliable.

Driving yourself is not without its hazards. Parts of the city are very congested: cars, bicycles, pedestrians, and animals do not always move predictably. At first you see only the confusion, but gradually a few basic rules of the road emerge. Traffic more or less follows the British system so that you drive on the left and overtake on the right, sounding the horn as you pass. Brights are flashed to indicate right-of-way, but it is safer not to argue with a vehicle larger than yours. Turn signals have two conflicting interpretations: in the city, they are mostly used along with hand signals to indicate right or left turns; on the open road, the signals usually mean that it is clear to overtake. Should an accident occur, it doesn't really matter who was "in the right," and most people don't carry insurance anyway. Minor accidents, in which no one has been seriously hurt, are usually settled on the spot. You will be surprised when you return to the United States at the bad driving habits you've acquired.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Pakistan is listed among the U.S. allies in the war on terrorism. Pakistan has been closely cooperating with U.S. forces in the hunt for al-Qaeda militants and remnants of Afghanistan's former Taliban regime. Tens of thousands of Pakistani groups have been deployed along the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan, to flush out foreign militants believed to be linked to al-Qaeda. Nearly 600 al-Qaeda suspects have been caught and handed over to U.S. forces.

However, despite an initial outpouring of public sympathy for America following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, discontent with the United States has grown around the world over the past few years, most dramatically in Muslim societies including Pakistan. The most serious problem facing the United States abroad is its very poor public image in the Muslim world, especially in the Middle East/Conflict Area. Favorable ratings are down sharply in Pakistan, one of America's most important allies in this region. According to a recent Pew Global Attitudes poll, the number of people giving the United States a positive rating has dropped by 13 points in Pakistan in the past few years.

In Pakistan, nearly 69% have an unfavorable view and no more than one-in-ten have positive feelings toward the United States. The intensity of this dislike is strong—more than 50% have a very unfavorable view.

In summary, antipathy toward the United States is shaped by how its international policies are interpreted. Gallup polls reflected that clearly in showing that large majorities in a nine-nation survey said the West doesn't respect Muslim values, nor show concern for the Islamic and Muslim worlds.

Nevertheless, those in the diplomatic communities will find that, on a personal level, Pakistanis remain for the most part warm and friendly. One should, however, continuously behave with caution, taking the delicate nature of U.S.-Pakistan relations into constant consideration in daily life.

## RESOURCES

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